



Project SUCCESS: Glendale's Title VII Systemwide Improvement Project

by Barbara Silcox and Kris Anstrom

This article was written in collaboration with the administrators of Glendale (CA) Unified School District's Project SUCCESS, particularly Kelly King and Judy Sanchez.

In fiscal year 1995, the U.S. Department of Education funded 32 Title VII Systemwide Improvement Projects. These projects, part of the new bilingual programming established under Title VII of the *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994* (IASA), are undertaking activities to ensure that the needs of limited English proficient (LEP) students are included in districtwide efforts to improve schooling for all children (Crawford, 1997).

The Glendale Unified School District, in Los Angeles County, California is among the thirty-two school districts awarded a Title VII Systemwide Improvement grant in 1995. Now in its third year, Project SUCCESS (Schools Uniting, Collaborating, Communicating, Educating Students Successfully) is working to ensure that LEP students are provided access to the core curriculum and achieve to the same high academic standards established for all students in the district and the state.

To accomplish these goals and objectives, the project staff are assisting each school within the district to:

- identify and address the needs of its LEP students;
- to reform staff assignment policies for optimum use of certificated bilingual and language development teachers;
- to improve the capacity of each site to select and implement the most appropriate instructional practices and programs;
- to reform assessment procedures and practices for all LEP students;
- to restructure policies affecting the placement of LEP students.

Glendale's School Population

The Glendale Unified School District has experienced dramatic changes in its growing student population. During the last ten years, the greatest increases in student enrollment have been for language minority and LEP students. Significant changes have also occurred in the make up of this language minority/LEP population. Less than ten years ago Spanish speakers made up the majority of the LEP students. Currently, Armenian speakers are the largest group of LEP students the District serves, followed by Spanish, Korean, Tagalog, and Arabic. The 13,911 LEP students enrolled in the district represent over 60 different language groups. Overall the District serves 29,907 K-12 students in 28 schools, and has the ninth largest LEP student enrollment out of the 1000+ school districts in California.

There is a wide range in the enrollment of LEP students across the district's twenty-eight schools. Some schools have extremely high percentages of LEP students (around 80%), while other schools have fewer than 10%. In addition, some schools have high concentrations of one or more language groups, while others have students from many different language groups.

Specific student achievement objectives set by the project are:

- To increase the percentage of LEP students redesignated to fluent English proficient by 8 percentage points to a district-wide average of 17 percent; and
- To narrow the achievement gap significantly in core subject areas between LEP students and their English-speaking peers.

Project SUCCESS: A Catalyst for Reform

Alignment with district and state reform efforts is critical to the successful implementation of Project SUCCESS. All districtwide reform efforts are guided by the district's strategic plan, *Glendale Schools 2000*. Over 350 district and school site personnel, students, parents, and community members worked together to create a blueprint for the school district to follow into the next century. Among the strategies outlined in the plan, are strategies to foster bilingualism among all students in the district. Six elementary schools provide Spanish primary language programs for LEP students and three elementary schools provide Armenian primary language programs. The senior high schools in the district are developing procedures for determining bilingual competency of graduating students; bilingual competency will be noted on the student's official transcript.

In addition to being guided by *Glendale Schools 2000*, Project SUCCESS integrates the components of the California State Curriculum Frameworks and the philosophies behind *Goals 2000* and *IASA* into the implementation of its systemwide improvement project.

Implementing Project Success

The implementation of Project SUCCESS is a multi-phased process organized around three high school clusters and their feeder schools. The project started with the high school cluster serving the largest number of LEP students; by the end of this year, the project will be in full implementation with all three high school clusters. Although the district was not organized in this fashion, the project staff felt that the cluster organization enabled the schools to collaborate and connect more closely with their neighborhoods and facilitated K-12 articulation.

Perhaps the most critical and most innovative approach to the implementation of Project SUCCESS is the site-level identification of needs based on an analysis of student achievement data. A team of stakeholders from each school site (including the principal and school guidance counselors) participates in a one-day meeting with project staff to identify areas of critical need and to develop a plan for improving the academic achievement

Project SUCCESS's approach to implementing reform within Glendale's school district is based upon a core set of principles:

- The focus on student achievement is what drives all reform activities;
- Successful reform requires support and participation from key stakeholders and leaders, including district administrators, school principals, department heads, and school guidance counselors;
- Teachers are key players in the reform process; they

for the LEP students within the school. These meetings are held off site and are facilitated by Dr. Laurie Olsen of California Tomorrow, a non-profit, advocacy organization. Team members are given release time and Project SUCCESS pays for Dr. Olsen's time and the substitute teachers required.

must be provided professional development and training opportunities to enable them to effect change;

- Successful reform is a continuous improvement process.

During these meetings, each school site team develops a professional development plan based on student needs identified from the examination of student achievement data. Each professional development plan includes data findings, program targets, and areas of focus, which can include: assessment, instructional methodology, instructional models, teaching strategies, curriculum, and enabling strategies.

Professional Development

The professional development plans assembled by these teams are reviewed regularly in light of up-to-date indicators of student achievement to ensure that the students' needs drive the professional development activities. Project staff then summarize and analyze individual site plans to determine commonalities and unique professional development needs for all schools in the District. Based on these findings, staff and consultants are identified to provide training for individual sites and clusters of schools as appropriate.

School personnel from all twenty-eight schools in the district, as well as district-level administrators are scheduled to participate in professional development activities during the project's five-year tenure. This includes 1,402 teachers and 89 administrators.

Identified Professional Development Needs

One outcome of this approach to professional development planning was the identification of literacy development in LEP students as an area in which most teachers across the district were in need of training. During the summer of 1996, an Elementary Summer Literacy Institute was held to train approximately 80 teachers in the components of a balanced literacy program. Emphasis was given to the unique needs LEP students have when acquiring literacy in a language other than their primary language. An Elementary Spanish Literacy Institute was held during the summer of 1997 to address the specific linguistic needs of Spanish speaking students in developing their primary language and in transferring their literacy development into English. At the secondary level, literacy development within the content areas was identified as an area for professional development. Summer institutes were held in 1996 and 1997 for secondary English/ESL, mathematics, science, and social studies content teachers. These

Examples of needed professional development areas identified by the school site teams:

- Utilizing assessment data for curricular and instructional decision-making
- Incorporating technology to assist in the delivery of instructional programs
- Strategies for integrated teaching units, "Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English" (also known as sheltered content instruction)
- Cooperative learning
- K-6 literacy teaching
- Intercultural communication and

institutes emphasized how literacy can best be facilitated through rigorous content instruction.

understanding

Teacher Focus Groups

To support implementation of new strategies introduced through the Institutes, monthly teacher focus groups are held. Teachers meet with peers to develop lesson plans, research new strategies, and share successes and frustrations throughout the year. The focus groups for elementary school personnel address topics for improving literacy instruction for LEP students. The focus groups for secondary school personnel are organized around content areas and address topics relating to accelerating academic achievement for LEP students through English/ESL, mathematics, science, and social studies. These focus group meetings have resulted in an increased commitment to instructional innovations. At the request of participants, the focus groups have been opened to all teachers to increase the opportunities for networking and collaboration across school sites.

Results to Date

In the two years since Project SUCCESS has been underway, project staff have learned several things.

1. School site administrators are integral in the effective implementation of each site's professional development plan and in making changes in school structure, climate, and instructional practices. Administrator training and involvement throughout the planning and implementation process is vital. Support from administrators can come in the form of encouraging teachers to take risks or to changing the master schedule to facilitate implementation of new programs.
2. The data-analysis meetings have resulted in district-level interest in the academic success of limited English proficient students. With the introduction of a new mathematics curriculum in the district, concern was raised regarding achievement of LEP students in mathematics courses, especially at the secondary level. Project SUCCESS is assisting the Instructional Support Services division with curriculum development, site-level professional development, and district-wide planning to ensure that the needs of LEP students are being met by this new curriculum and that teachers have the necessary training to ensure student achievement in all levels of math classes.
3. Avenues for communication and collaboration between project staff and district level leadership have been established. A project steering committee consisting of the Deputy Superintendent of Secondary Schools, the Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools, the Director of Instructional Support Services, the Director of Special Education, Coordinators for School Improvement, Title I, Gifted and Talented Education, Beginning Teacher Support Program, and principals and teachers representing the three school clusters, as well as project staff meets regularly to monitor the implementation of districtwide professional development activities. This communication and collaboration underscores the systemwide (districtwide) implementation of this project.

Conclusion

In the first two years of operation, Project SUCCESS has learned that the focus on student achievement must drive all project efforts. In addition teachers must have input concerning their own training and be included in the design of professional development activities. Foundations of trust and commitment to

student achievement must be established before changes can be recommended and received by teachers and administrators. Finally, staff must seek out experienced trainers, expert in their knowledge and in their facilitation skills, to provide new ideas and offer the technical assistance needed to sustain change.

Successful completion of this project will endow the district with a cadre of trained staff who can provide outstanding instructional programs to LEP students and who can train other staff members in the years to come.

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